

Some Remarks on Definiteness of Antecedents of Relatives : An Alternative Approach

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Some Remarks on Definiteness of Antecedents of Relatives —— An Alternative Approach ——

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関係詞の先行詞の定性に関して ——従来案に対する代案——

北 原 良 夫

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In Kitahara (1995), we critically reviewed the four previous approaches trying to explain the distinction of articles co-occurring with an antecedent of a relative, roughly according to Itagaki (1980), and examined their respective adequacy. In this paper, second part to Kitahara (1995), it is suggested that these approaches can be reasonably unified taking a viewpoint of *discourse* or *informational* structure into consideration, resulting in a new better alternative approach to systematically explain the phenomena concerned. We also discuss some related issues with our discussion there. Next, we present some supporting evidence for our alternative, given from the observations which are not directly relevant to our problem here. Lastly, we take up and try to solve the problems which we have left open in the preceding discussions.

1. Introduction

In Kitahara (1995), we critically reviewed the four previous approaches trying to explain the distinction of articles co-occurring with an antecedent of a relative, roughly according to Itagaki (1980), and examined their respective adequacy. In this paper, second part to Kitahara (1995), it is suggested that these approaches can be reasonably unified taking a viewpoint of *discourse* or *informational structure* into consideration, resulting in a new bet-

ter alternative approach to systematically explain the phenomena concerned. We also discuss some related issues with our discussion there. Next, we present some supporting evidence for our alternative, given from the observations which are not directly relevant to our problem here. Lastly, we take up and try to solve the problems which we have left open in the preceding discussions.

2. A Unification

In Kitahara (1995), we roughly reviewed the four previous approaches trying to explain the difference of articles in *Relative Clause Construction (RCC)*, ¹⁾ as shown in (1):

- (1) a. He bought *a* book which sold very well.
- b. He bought *the* book which sold very well.

and pointed out their respective inadequacy. But, then, don't these approaches have anything to do with one another? Or, isn't one approach included in another to any degree? To put it conversely, isn't one approach deducible from another? In this chapter, we would like to consider this problem. Anticipating the conclusion, we can unify these approaches and explain the difference of articles in an RCC in a principled way from viewpoint of discourse or informational structure.

2.1 *The Relationship among Harada's, Langendoen's, and Annear's Approaches*

If we anticipate the conclusion, both Harada's and Langendoen's approaches only cover in another way a part of the cases which can be covered by Annear's approach, and, in other words, we can deduce both former approaches from the latter. However, it seems that neither Langendoen's nor Annear's arguments can cover Harada's argument on the examples in which an abstract noun is used as an antecedent in an RCC, as we have already pointed out in Kitahara (1995, 82f). So, for the time being, we leave open the problem of how to incorporate the case into our alternative

framework and do not take it into account in the following discussions in this chapter. We would like to take the problem up in Chapter 4.

2.1.1 *The Relationship between Harada's and Annear's Approaches*

First, let us consider the relationship between Harada's and Annear's approaches. But, it would be helpful to review their arguments here again before going into a main issue. Let us consider the examples below.

- (2) a. He didn't buy a book which sold very well.
- b. He didn't buy the book which sold very well.

Harada's argument on the difference of articles between (2a) and (2b) is that it corresponds to the existence or non-existence of the presupposition by a speaker on the presence of the referent expressed by the RCC. Annear, on the other hand, attributes the difference to the presupposition by a speaker on whether the content expressed by a relative clause is *given* information for his/her hearer or it is *new* information for him/her.

So far as such sentences as in (2) are concerned, it seems that we can deduce whether the presence of the referent expressed by an RCC is presupposed or not from whether the information conveyed by a relative clause is *given* or *new*, that is, *presupposed* or *asserted*. According to Harada, in (2a) the referent may not exist. According to Annear, on the other hand, because the content of the relative clause in (2a) is asserted, negating the syntactic main verb may cast doubt on the truth of the content expressed by the relative clause; therefore, it follows that the referent may not exist. The

same result as in Harada's argument. In (2b), the referent does exist whether we follow Harada or Annear.

Furthermore, by following Annear's argument, we can easily deal with the sentences given in (3), the difference between both of which cannot be accounted for along the lines of Harada's argument (Kitahara 1995, 81).

- (3) a. He bought a book which sold very well.
- b. He bought the book which sold very well.

So, we may conclude that Annear's argument includes Harada's.

2. 1. 2 *The Relationship between Langendoen's and Annear's Approaches*

The relationship between Langendoen's and Annear's approaches seems to be easier to understand than that between Harada's and Annear's approaches.

Here again, let us review Langendoen's arguments for convenience of discussion, using the sentences given in (4).

- (4) a. A man who was standing by the door just collapsed.
- b. The man who was standing by the door just collapsed.

According to Langendoen, the difference of articles between (4a) and (4b) corresponds to that of the presuppositions by a speaker as to whether or not his/her hearer can identify the referent specified by the RCC.

This type of approach seems to be included in Annear's. Let us consider, for example, sentence (4b), where a *definite relative clause con-*

struction (D-RCC) is used. According to Annear, the use of D-RCC implies that what is expressed by a relative clause is *given* information for a hearer, which means that the hearer knows and, therefore, can identify the referent intended by his/her speaker, which is exactly what Langendoen argues.

Furthermore, we can account for the use of D-RCC in (5) according to Annear, and not according to Langendoen. The sentence can be uttered where, even though a hearer does not know the referent intended by the speaker and, therefore, cannot identify it, he/she knows something about the knife as *given* information, as Annear argues. For more detailed discussion, see Kitahara (1995, 82).

- (5) I used the knife that Seymour gave me.

2. 1. 3 *Summary of This Subsection*

The above discussions have shown that Annear's approach can cover the examples which cannot be explained along the lines of Harada's or Langendoen's approaches, to say nothing of those which can be; it is of wider application. Furthermore, both Harada's and Langendoen's approaches can be deduced from Annear's.

2. 2 *The Relationship between Annear's and Grannis' Approaches*

We have seen in the preceding subsection that both Harada's and Langendoen's approaches are deducible from Annear's. Then, what about the relationship between Annear's and Grannis' approaches? Do they also have any relationship with each other or not? Before considering the problem, we would like to examine the function of both a definite article and a relative clause in definite

nominal expressions.

2.2.1 *The Function of the Definite Article and Relative Clause in Definite Nominal Expressions*

The function of a definite article in definite nominal expressions is, in a word, to indicate to a hearer that his/her speaker tries to denote a certain specified thing and not others.²⁾ However, the definite article plays no part in finding out this specified object. Instead, it is only a signal to instruct a hearer (or a reader) to look at the context or the situation. Thus, we might think that, when a definite article is used in an RCC, it is not the definite article but the relative clause that plays an important role in finding out such a specified object.

In Quirk and Greenbaum (1973, 72), it is argued that we can begin a conversation with such sentences as (6).

- (6) The house on the corner is for sale.

The post-modification by the phrase *on the corner* in (6) passes for some such unspoken preamble shown as in (7).

- (7) There is, as you know, a house on the corner.

In short, the definite nominal expression *the house on the corner* in (6) is considered to have the sentence (7), which can be used to begin a conversation if necessary, embedded in it. In other words, the post-modifier *on the corner* in (6) saves us trouble to say the sentence (7).

Consequently, we could suppose that, in a D-RCC, a kind of definite nominal expression, the relative clause has the same functions as the sentence (7) does. That is to say, the sentence

(6) is essentially equivalent to the following sentence (8).

- (8) The house which is on the corner is for sale.

On the basis of these considerations, we may argue that a D-RCC is an expression used to go directly into a main topic without saying such sentences as (7). Viewed from the standpoint of discourse, it is considered to be an expression used to provide a common background of discourse.

Now, recall Grannis' argument that a speaker uses a D-RCC to signal that he/she is uniquely defining a mutual world of discourse. (See Grannis (1972) and also Kitahara (1995, 83).) And, notice that this is exactly identical to what we have said just above.

2.2.2 *The Relationship between Annear's and Grannis' Approaches*

Now, let us consider Annear's approach in relation to the considerations in the preceding subsection.

As we have mentioned there, the relative clause in a D-RCC functions as some unspoken preamble shown as in (7) above, which can be used to start some kind of conversation. Therefore, it seems that, from a viewpoint of discourse, what is expressed by the relative clause is regarded as a presupposition. By contrast, in an I-RCC, the relative clause provides the information which the antecedent noun cannot convey; namely, what is expressed by the relative clause in an I-RCC is an assertion. Therefore, if we take the notion of discourse into consideration, Annear's and Grannis' approaches can be unified; they supplement each other.

2.3 Some Related Issues

As we have seen in the preceding sections, the four approaches concerned in this paper can be reasonably unified, resulting in a new better alternative approach to systematically explain the phenomena concerned. The distinction of articles in an RCC, that is, the difference between D-RCCs and I-RCCs, might be easily and reasonably explained if we assume that, when what is expressed by the relative clause in an RCC is a presupposition, a definite article is used and also that, when it is an assertion, an indefinite article is used.

Now, there is related issues which we have to attend to: whether we should deal with a definite article depending on its various usages, though so far we have not done so for convenience of discussion. Of course, it would be better, and more reasonable, to do so. In fact, we should divide the use of a definite article in an RCC into two for the present discussion, one of which is a *cataphoric* use as exemplified in (9) below.

- (9) a. *The Philadelphia* which Mr. Johnson knows so well is a heritage of colonial times.
 b. *The pencil* in your hand is mine.
 c. Who is *the* girl sitting in the corner?
 d. He is not *the* man to betray his friend.

The example of particular attention is (9a), in which example a definite article co-occurs with a proper noun *Philadelphia*. Therefore, at least in this example, it would be natural to think that the definite article is used as a denotation of following modifiers, a restrictive relative clause in this case. Notice here that we cannot use an indefinite article instead of a

definite one, at least in (9a); generally speaking, an RCC with a cataphoric definite article used in it has no corresponding RCC with an indefinite article.

Furthermore, notice that a definite article does not necessarily co-occur with a noun even though restrictive modifiers follow the noun. This is shown in the examples used in the discussion so far and also in the example below.

- (10) He is a student of English linguistics.

In NP *a student of English linguistics* of the above example, an indefinite article is used, even though the head noun *student* is followed by a restrictive modifier, a prepositional phrase *of English linguistics* in this example. This is because the sentence simply means that he is one of the students in the class.

This observation would lead us to argue that it is more appropriate to think of definite article in (9a) as denoting the context following the head of the NP *Philadelphia*, that is, a restrictive relative clause. In fact, this argument is supported by semantics. In (9a), one of the various aspects concerned with a place is specified by the restrictive relative clause. The NP in (9a) *The Philadelphia which Mr. Johnson knows so well* implies the aspects of Philadelphia which Mr. Johnson is very familiar with, and the aspects are implicitly contrasted with those which Mr. Johnson is not.

Now, the other usage of a definite article which is concerned with us here is a common definite use of the article. And, an RCC with this use of definite article used in it has a corresponding RCC with an indefinite article, unlike an RCC with a cataphoric use of definite article used in it.

Taking these observations into account, we may conclude that, where there are two ver-

sions of RCCs, the one with an indefinite article and the corresponding one with a definite article, the difference depends on whether the information conveyed by a relative clause is *given* or *new*, as Annear argues. On the other hand, where there is an RCC with a cataphoric definite article but is no corresponding RCC with an indefinite article, the use of the definite article is inevitable but we need another way of explaining the fact.

The role of a cataphoric use of definite article is, as the term literally means, to denote that a certain expression occurs in the following context and that *new* information is embedded there. Applying this to RCCs, we can argue that what is expressed by a relative clause is *new* information if the definite article is in a cataphoric use.

In the above discussion, we argue that we should recognize at least two usages of definite articles for our present purpose. It seems that there is no doubt about it, but there is another question which we have to answer. This is why the same word, a definite article *the*, is used in spite of the fact that there is much difference between its roles.

According to Jackendoff, a definite article can be used under the presupposition of uniqueness (Jackendoff 1972, 287). Let us consider a cataphoric definite article in the first place, taking this observation into account. As we have already argued, a definite article in this use denotes the following context conveying *new* information. As far as this case is concerned, we could argue that what is referred by the head noun is uniquely specified by the following context. As for the case with a common definite use of definite articles used, following modifiers convey *given* information, as we have argued above, and what is referred to by the head noun has been uniquely specified

already by the preceding context. So, a definite article is necessarily used. The use of the word *the* implies semantic presupposition of uniqueness, whether in a cataphoric usage or in a common definite usage. In other words, various usage of this word are derivative from the fundamental usage under the presupposition of uniqueness.

The argument along this line is applicable to the RCCs with a common noun as an antecedent. As we have argued above, when there exists a minimal pair of RCCs only with the difference of articles, the difference results from whether the information conveyed by the relative clause is *given* or *new*. When there does not exist such a minimal pair, the article is a cataphoric definite article, which is only a marker to denote that *new* information appears in the following context. In either case, a definite article is used under the semantic condition that the referent by a head noun is uniquely specified.

This kind of approach is essentially the same as Itagaki's (1980), which we roughly referred to in Kitahara (1995) but put the details aside there. He, unlike Harada and the other three, explains the difference of articles in an RCC based on inherent properties of articles. In fact, he argues that the difference result from the difference of fixing function of the referent by an RCC. A definite article is used when a speaker refers to the referent which is known to both him/her and his/her hearer, in which case the relative clause functions as a condition to fix the referent. On the other hand, an indefinite article is used when there is no shared knowledge between a speaker and his/her hearer, in which case the relative clause functions as a specifier of the referent by the head noun.

3. The Evidence for Our Unification

We have suggested in the preceding chapter that the four approaches can be reasonably unified, with the result of our alternative. In this chapter, we would like to present some observations by Hooper and Thompson (1973) as supporting evidence for our suggestion. The evidence is given from the observations which are not directly relevant to our problem and, for the very reason, might be regarded as strong supporting evidence for our alternative.

Hooper and Thompson (1973) examine *Root Transformations* (RTs) of Emonds (1970). According to Emonds, the definitions of *root sentence* and RT are as follows, respectively:

Root Sentence: “a root will mean either the highest S in a tree, an S immediately dominated by the highest S or the reported S in direct discourse.”

(Emonds 1970, 6)

Root Transformation: “an RT is one in which any constituents moved, inserted or copied are immediately dominated by a root in the derived structure.”

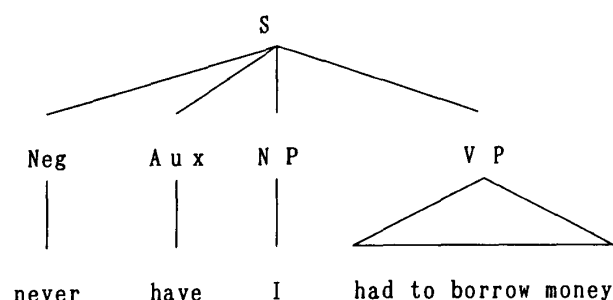
(Emonds 1970, 7)

As an example, consider the RT which Emonds calls Negative Constituent Preposing (NCP), which transforms (11a) into (11b).

- (11) a. I have never had to borrow money.
b. Never have I had to borrow money.

NCP fronts a negative constituent and triggers Subject Auxiliary Inversion (SAI). The derived structure of (11b) is roughly given in (12).

(12)



Notice that the two elements, Neg and Aux, which were moved by the RT, are immediately dominated by the highest S in the derived structure (12).

Coordinately conjoined sentences can be qualified as roots, so Emonds' definition correctly predicts that NCP will apply in (13) and that the example in (14) will be ungrammatical because RTs are not allowed to apply in embedded sentences.

- (13) I've been out of work before, but never have I had to borrow money.

- (14) *The fact that never has he had to borrow money makes him very proud.

Emonds' definition would also predict that the examples in (15) are ungrammatical. Most speakers of English, however, find these sentences quite acceptable.

- (15) a. Robert was quite nervous, because never before had he had to borrow money.
b. Alice vowed that under no circumstances would she loan me the key.

Then, Hooper and Thompson, first examining the individual RTs to find out their nature and function, argue that the common function of all the RTs is to emphasize some particular element in the sentence.³⁾ Furthermore, they

associate the applicability of RTs with a semantic notion of assertion and indicate that the application of RTs which produce emphasis would be inappropriate in the clauses which are not asserted, for example, embedded clauses which are presupposed or clauses which are questions or imperatives. For example, they distinguish five classes of verbs which may have *that* complements and, after showing that some complements are asserted while others are not, depending on which class of verbs are used, they indicate that RTs are actually restricted to asserted sentential complements in applicability.

Now, let us consider the distinction of articles in an RCC, taking into account the fact that RTs are applicable only to asserted clauses.

- (16) a. The car that I only rarely drove is in excellent condition.
 b. *The car that only rarely did I drive is in excellent condition.

The application of NCP to (16a), where a D-RCC is used, produces ungrammatical (16b).⁴⁾ If Hooper and Thompson's argument that RTs are restricted to assertion in their application is correct, then what is expressed by a relative clause in (16a), generally in a D-RCC, is not an assertion. Furthermore, as is also argued by Hooper and Thompson, whenever what is expressed by a relative clause is not an assertion, it is always a presupposition. Thus, it has to be concluded that what is expressed by a relative clause in a D-RCC is considered to be a presupposition.

Next, let us consider sentences such as (17).

- (17) a. I saw a dress which I would not have bought under any circumstances.

- b. I saw a dress which under no circumstances would I have bought.

The application of NCP to (17a), where an I-RCC is used, produces grammatical (17b), in contrast to the fact that the application of NCP to (16a) leads to ungrammatical (16b). If Hooper and Thompson's argument is correct, then what is expressed by a relative clause in (16a), generally in an I-RCC, has to be an assertion.

Hooper and Thompson also argue that there seems to be evidence confirming the result. Let us consider the sentences given in (18) and (19).⁵⁾

- (18) a. I know a girl who speaks Basque.
 b. A girl I know speaks Basque.
 (19) a. I know the girl who speaks Basque.
 b. The girl I know speaks Basque.

(18a) is nearly synonymous with (18b). The extent to which these sentences are synonymous is striking, especially when contrasted with the nonsynonymy between (19a) and (19b), which are identical to (18a) and (18b) respectively except for the articles used. This is for this reason: in either sentence of (18), where an I-RCC is used, though one clause is syntactically embedded as a relative clause in the other clause, neither of them is semantically subordinate to the other to any significant degree and, rather, they are assertions of nearly equal importance. It apparently matters very little which clause is syntactically a main one.⁶⁾ On the other hand, in either sentence of (19), where a D-RCC is used, one clause is considered to be embedded in the other semantically as well as syntactically; therefore, the difference in meaning arises between (19a) and (19b).

As we have shown above, our unification in

Chapter 2 seems to be supported by the evidence obtained from the observations of the phenomena not directly related to the problem at present, namely, the applicability of RTs.

4. Some Open Questions

In Kitahara (1995), we roughly reviewed and criticized the four approaches, and, then, in Chapter 2 of this paper, we have shown that they can be reasonably unified, resulting in our alternative. The particular problem with the unification there was how to incorporate into our unification both the case where an abstract noun is used as an antecedent in an RCC and the case where the construction appears in an adverbial phrase led by *with*, which Harada (1971) discusses in detail. By using none of Langendoen's, Annear's, and Grannis' approaches can we account for the cases, as we have shown in Kitahara (1995). So, we put the cases aside in the discussions in Chapter 2. In this chapter, however, we would like to consider whether our alternative approach can cover such cases.

Let us consider this matter, using the sentences give in (20)–(23), which are cited from Harada (1971).

- (20) a. The amateurs beat (PAST) the pros with Φ/a /the regularity that had been characteristic of this group of amateurs.
- b. The amateurs beat (PRES) the pros with Φ/a /the regularity that will be characteristic of this group of amateurs.
- (21) The amateurs beat (PRES) the pros with Φ/a /the regularity that can /may be characteristic of this group of amateurs.

- (22) a. The amateurs beat (PAST) the pros with Φ/a /the regularity that had not been expected.
- b. The amateurs beat (PRES) the pros with Φ/a /the regularity that will/may/can not be expected.
- (23) a. He greeted me with Φ/a /the warmth that was puzzling.
- b. He greeted me with Φ/a /the warmth that was expected.

According to Harada, the cases where we can judge *determinateness* are those where there is a temporal order between the content of a main clause and that of a relative clause ((20)), those where, though there is not any temporal orders at all, a modal auxiliary is used within a relative clause ((21)), and those where there is a negative adverb word *not* within a relative clause ((22)).⁷⁾ In these cases, if determinateness exists, then a definite article is used and, if it does not, then an indefinite article is used.

And, the sentences which do not fit any of the above cases and, therefore, are neutral to determinateness, are those shown in (23). In this case, the difference of articles depends upon the class to which a predicate verb in a relative clause belongs.

First, let us consider the cases where we can judge determinateness. Why can a certain interrelation be found between the notion and the selection of articles? As we have already seen above, according to Jackendoff, a definite article is used under the condition that the referent by a noun with which it co-occurs is uniquely specified. Taking this observation into account, we might argue that a definite article is used in the sentences like (20)–(22), that is, the ones for which we can judge determinateness, because the referent by the RCC can be uniquely specified when the content of

the relative clause is determinate, as illustrated, for example, by (20a). When the content is not determinate, on the other hand, an indefinite article is used because the referent cannot be uniquely specified, as shown, for example, in (20b).

Next, let us consider the sentences like (23). In these cases, it seems that there exists some interrelation between semantic properties of the verb or VP in a relative clause and properties of articles, though this argument needs further examination. For example, in (23b), repeated here again:

- (23) a. He greeted me with * Φ /a/*the warmth that was puzzling.
 b. He greeted me with * Φ /*a/the warmth that was expected.

the relative clause with VP *was expected* might have the property to uniquely specify what is referred to by the RCC. (Though, in this argument, we should neglect the problem whether the referent really exists or is identifiable and should take the existence for granted even though we cannot point out it.)

The discussions above might lead us to the conclusion that Harada's argument to cover the RCC with an abstract noun as an antecedent could be put in the way focusing on the properties of articles, especially a definite article, and whether the information conveyed by a relative clause in an RCC is *given* or *new*. In addition, we ultimately need not classify the environments where RCCs occur, as Harada does.

5. Conclusion

As for the problem of what makes the distinc-

tion of articles in RCCs, we suggested that the four previous approaches can be reasonably unified by taking a point of view of discourse into account, resulting in our alternative approach. Next, we referred to the observations in Hooper and Thompson (1973) to support our unification. Then, we made an attempt to solve the problem that we had put aside in the preceding discussion, including the discussion in Kitahara (1995).

Our argument on the distinction of articles is as follows. If the content expressed by a relative clause in an RCC in a presupposition, a definite article is used, and, if it is an assertion, an indefinite article is used. We can attribute the distinction to a function of the value of the content expressed by a relative clause in discourse or informational structure. Namely, in a D-RCC, a relative clause functions as a presupposition and, in an I-RCC, it functions as an assertion.

NOTES

1) For the terms used, such as *Relative Clause Construction*, see Kitahara (1995).

2) We could attribute a presupposition of uniqueness, not always a presupposition of identifiability, to the definite article (see Jackendoff 1972, 287). And, also in Tabakowska (1980), it is argued that we can use the definite article even though the identifiability is not presupposed. These observations also show that Langendoen's approach is not adequate.

3) They argue that SAI and Tag Question Formation are not emphatic RTs. The former's function is to mark certain construction such as *yes-no* question and exclamation, and the latter's function is to ask for confirmation about the truth of an assertion. However, these very functions also restrict the application of these transformations to asserted clauses as in the case of other RTs, though they are of limited applicability.

4) Consider the following sentence.

- (i) The car, which only rarely did I drive, is in excellent condition.

The acceptability of (i) is a consequence of the fact that what is expressed by a non-restrictive relative clause (NR) is an assertion rather than a presupposition. Thompson (1971) discusses the semantic and syntactic similarity of NRs to surface conjunctions. Any sentence consisting of two conjoined assertions can be associated with a sentence containing as NR. Then, the latter form of sentence has to be regarded as a combination of two assertions.

5) Thompson (1971) argues that restrictive relative clauses as well as non-restrictive ones derive from conjunctions. She suggests that the structure underlying all the sentences given in (18) and (19) is like (i).

- (i) (I met girl) (girl speaks Basque).

6) A similar observation can be made in the following sentences.

- (i) The TV, which had been misbehaving for weeks, finally gave out.
(ii) The TV, which finally gave out, had been misbehaving for weeks.

In these sentences, reversing the syntactic roles of the main clause and NRs has no discernible effect on the meaning of the sentences at all. The synonymy between these examples is a natural consequence of the hypothesis that both clauses in these sentences are assertions, as shown in note 4.

7) For the comment on other negative adverbials than *not*, see note 6 in Kitahara (1995).

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